The Ruling on killing non-combats
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The following question was asked by someone to Shaykh Anwar Al Awlaki ...

Sheikh 'Uthaymīn says that it is allowed to kill non-combats if they kill our non-combats, because of the ayāt that say, that we can do the same to them as they do to us, but some say that this is incorrect, because if the kuffār rape Muslim women, we can still not rape their women. What do we say to these people?

Answer: First of all, some things need to be made straight:It wasn't the Muslims who dragged in civilians into this war. It was the Americans, and on a scale that is astronomically different than ours. They killed millions of Muslim civilians in cold blood during the embargo of Iraq which was before 9/11.

Secondly, it is amazing how the West wants to go about its imperialistic greedy oppressive business of occupying, colonizing and plundering the wealth of the Muslim world, supporting a racist and brutal occupation in the heart of the Muslim world, Palestine, and then does not expect any retaliation whatsoever from the Muslims. And with all insolence, paints the Muslims who are defending themselves as the aggressors. I mean this is something that could never pass if the West did not have the tools to pass on such a lie and such an unbelievable distortion of history, but the West does have such a tool and that is the media. The media succeeded in distorting the facts and presenting wrong as right, evil as good.

Now back to the topic of targeting the populations of countries that are at war with us. Is it allowed or not? Well, first of all, why is the West so concerned about this issue, why do they talk about it a lot? This emphasis on this form of war is proof that it hurts them. It hurtsthe West when we target their civilians and it concerns them and worries them, and this is why they are spending so much effort in trying to scare us off from adopting to such measures. Because for those who understand how a democracy functions, when a group starts targeting the population of a democratic nation rather than its army you could end up opening a Pandora's box that the political elite fail to control. You do not know how the masses would react. In Spain for example, after the Madrid bombings they kicked out the Aznar government. A population in a Western country may start asking questions if they feel endangered, they might start asking, "Why are we fighting wars 1000s of miles away? Why are we supporting Israel? What Benefit to us a society as a nation do we get from supporting Israel? Is it worth the price? These are questions the political elite in Western countries do not want their populations to ask, and therefore, they want to keep their populations at sleep and ironically,it is the operations of the Mujahideen, that are targeting these populations, that might wake up these populations and make them ask the questions that are important for them and that they should be asking. But if the attacks don't wake them up and end up making them more resolved to carry on with supporting their governments in their anti-Muslim policies, then fine, they have received what they deserve as voters and tax payers who are participating in the war against Islam with their wealth and vote.

Therefore, if you ask me as a tactic, is targeting the civilian population of the West a good thing to do? I would say yes, because it is much more potent and powerful. Soldiers are expected to die anyway. That's why they sign up for the army, to fight and kill or be killed. So a soldier is at risk

anyway and that risk is factored into his job. But a civilian is not. So when you hit the civilian you hit them where it hurts most and that is what our tactics are about.

I would also want to say to my brothers that we want to understand what is the objective of our operations: The primarily objective is not to achieve the most deaths but to achieve the most effect, the most leverage. So an operation such as the parcel bombs did not actually kill anyone but it achieved an effect that may surpass an operation where tens of people get killed. That is because the parcel bomb operation, which the enemy calls foiled parcel bomb plot and we call Operation Hemorrhage and consider it to be successful by all means, will end up costing the enemy billions of dollars in added security measures, billions of dollars in lost revenue because of stricter security measures, a xenophobic knee jerk reaction by the Obama administration that introduced mandatory new security measures in all US airports which would cost money and most importantly aggravation it would cause to the American people.

It is interesting how the American government claims that we attack America because of its freedoms and then use our operations as excuses to curtail the freedoms of the American people. Civil liberties in the West are a self-inflicted casualty of war.America and the West along with it are on their way out. Our brothers need to realize that their operations against the West are critical at this stage of our war because they would reveal that the war on terror was in fact a failure and a mistake and that war against the Muslim world is not the way to defend the West.But first we need to look into whether this is halāl or harām.We look into two situations from the time of the Messenger. Bayāt and the mangonel.

Bayāt was where the enemy would be attacked at night, ambushed, and during the fighting inevitably women and children and elderly get killed because of the darkness. Rasūlullāh ﷺwas asked about permissibility ofkilling women and children during bayātand he allowed it. This is in authentic narrations from Imām Muslim and others.

Imām Ahmad was asked about the permissibility of using bayāt during his time he said, "And aren't our incursions against the Romans but bayāt?" The matter is so agreed upon that Imām Ahmad says, "I do not know of anyone who has discouraged bayāt." The mangonel was used by the Messenger of Allāh during the siege of At-Tāif and was used by the generations of Mujahideen following that.

Ibn Rushd says: The general body of scholars agree that it is allowed to strike forts with the mangonel whether there are women and children in them or not. Imām Abu Hanifasays that if the Muslims lay siege to their enemy and the enemy stands on the walls with the children of Muslims used as shields we should strike them with arrows and mangonels but with having the intentions of not attacking the Muslim children.

Imām al Shāfi' says: That has been the tradition of the Muslims and the righteous predecessors from the companions of the Messenger of Allāh in regards to the fortresses of the enemy and it has not been narrated to us that anyone of them stopped short of attacking a fort by mangonels or other forms of weaponry just because there are women and children among them or because there are those that shouldn't be killed among them.

Do we throw out 1400 years of war methods out of the window and suddenly come up with new rules? That's how they did it. Rasūlullāh ﷺ,the sahābah, the khulafā al rashidūn, the Ummayads, the Abbasids, the Mumlūks and the Ottomans all used catapults and later on artillery to bomb cities. That's what a catapult does, it throws a missile whether it is a rock or a container filled with

combustible material into a city and it could hit a woman or a child just like it could hit a man. That is exactly what placing a bomb in Washington or London or any other Western city is. It is no different than what our predecessors used to do for 1400 years.

On the other hand, we know of the hadīth that prohibits the killing of women and children, so how can we combine what was mentioned below with such hadīth. The answer is that women and children should not be singled out, should not be specifically targeted and if they fall as prisoners of war it is not allowed to execute them.Throughout our history whenever women and children would fall captives there lives were spared unlike with the crusaders for example who slaughtered thousands of Muslim prisoners or the Moguls who wiped out the entire populations of numerous Muslims cities. However when men, women and children are mixed and integrated such as in a city or village there is no doubt that it is allowed to target them while carrying the intentions of not specifically targeting the women and children. Therefore, an attack on a population center such as a US, British, French or German city with a bomb or a firearm attack is definitely allowed.

Then we should look into the other issue which was mentioned in the question and that is that we are allowed to do to the enemy what they do to us. You see war is a matter that takes place between two parties. So you cannot set up rules that restrict yourself while your enemy does not agree to abide too. The US, Britain, France, are all guilty of horrendous human rights abuses against Muslims so who are they to lecture us on ethics of war. And who is this Muslim who has the audacity to tell us that we are not allowed to retaliate against America or its allies when American drones have attacked Pakistan over 100 times in 2011 alone! And we all know who are the casualties of drone attacks.